Outreach, Partnerships and Volunteer Initiatives Station Overview

Reaching and connecting to underserved populations has been a challenge for many land resource management agencies. Along with sharing our overall outreach, partnerships and volunteer initiatives, we will also discuss best practices and challenges in reaching the underserved. Through open dialogue, we would like you to share your experiences and/or come by and hear what others are doing in this effort. The following are examples of questions that may be asked:

- What underserved groups are you engaging?
- What have been some of your greatest challenges?
- What methods of marketing are you using?
- Who are community influencers in this area and other areas in the state?
- What are effective ways to get elected official involved?
- Would you like to work in partnership with us in reaching the underserved? Examples will be given on how you may help.

Best Practices

- Don't be afraid to launch out into the deep
- Stay on the boat. Don't give up, collaboration takes time and follow through
- Show that you care about the needs of their group or organization
- If possible, show a connection to their cause
- Be ready to educate
- Don't assume anything…for example, low-income does not mean the person is of color
- Expect to feel uncomfortable; I believe people feel most comfortable with people who look like them. Embrace that we have more commonalities than differences. Focus on the commonalities
- Reach out to others who already have corporate sponsors involved and piggy back off that; speak with friends outside of land management resource agencies
- Follow up consistently and keep them in the loop
- While you are working on your action plan or strategy, begin developing genuine relationships

Current Endeavors

- Forest Service National Library provided us with links and sources to research papers on people of color in natural resources and how to connect with underserved populations. Will use information to help create communication and marketing collateral and to engage the underserved

- Speaking with the South Carolina Technical College System about an app development contest that would connect low-income, youth and minorities to nature. Possibility of Microsoft being a partner. Possible participants: Forestry, Agriculture and Computer Science students at technical colleges in South Carolina. Possible categories: app for youth to learn about the activities at the Sewee Environmental Education Center, app for low-income and minorities that shows the benefits of the forest and nature. Rules and regulations would be developed with sponsors and partners.

- Establishing relationships with TRIO programs in South Carolina. Set up a table at South Carolina TRIO Annual Student Leadership Conference. Over 300 students in attendance ranging from age 14 to adult. Spoke with students about volunteer opportunities, possible job shadowing, unpaid internships and the Pathways program. Spoke with TRIO advisors about the possibility of a Forest Leader Institute over the summer to create "Forest Peer Leaders" and field trips

- Environmental education at Sewee Visitor Center with USFWS and Friends Group

- Environmental education through three Outfitter Guides (Nature Ad, Coastal expeditions and Charleston County Parks and Recreation)

- Engaging vacationing volunteers and NCCC on projects at the forest level

- Regular volunteer program (CG Hosts, Eagle Scout Projects, etc)
- Recreation special use events throughout the year (foot races, bike races, orienteering, etc)

- FS personnel representing the forest in various committees and groups throughout the area. (Sewee to Santee Summit, Longleaf Initiative, Gullah Geechee, Toastmasters, etc)

Future Endeavors
- Series of round tables/conversations with community influencers, churches, teachers, especially Project Learning Tree teachers, on best ways to reach the underserved in their communities. Culminate with a webinar or series of webinars in which other land resource management agencies will be invited. May also offer as a public meeting. As partners, ask churches and community influencers to post in bulletins and on websites.

  - How can we get the names of people like this?
  - How do we find people like this?
  - How are people in this general category alike or different? If we want to invite people who feel like they have this in common, what advice do you have?
  - What would it take to get people to come to a discussion like this?
  - Who should invite people to participate?
  - When would it be easiest for these people to come? (Time of day, day of week)
  - Where would be the best place to hold the discussion?
  - What would be some good questions to ask?
  - What do you think of these questions? (Try out a few questions.)
  - What kind of person should ask the questions?
- Create tailored outreach and place in non-traditional media outlets
  - Have interpretative specialist design placemats and put them in local restaurants

- o   Place posters and fliers in grocery stores, laundromats, barbershops, hair salons and in public transportation
    - o   Send news releases to people of color radio and TV stations and newspapers
    - o   Ask middle and high school newspapers to post info on planning and nature
- Contact SC Educational Television Network for know-it-all.org which is a K-12 educational web portal; see if we could get youth-friendly info about the forest planning process and nature on their portal
- Work with local colleges' public relations and marketing capstone classes to help create public involvement strategies

Potential organizations in which to partner that are nationwide or have more than one location

- TRIO programs www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/trio/index.html
- Gear Up www2.ed.gov/programs/gearup/index.html
- Boys and Girls Clubs bgca.org
- Big Brothers/Big Sisters Programs www.bbbs.org
- Communities in School www.communitiesinschools.org
- College Summit www.collegesummit.org
- YMCA/YWCA ymca.net
- Housing Authority; web addresses varies per state
- Vocational Rehabilitation; web addresses varies per state